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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to assess the effects of 2 years of marketing and retention efforts in the Virginia community college system (VCCS) on the market segment of 18-21 year old students. The study examined enrollment trends between 1984 and 1986, using comparable data from a 1985 study. Study findings included the following: (1) the proportion of full-time students dropped from 25.9% in fall 1984 to 23.8% in fall 1985 to 23.3% in fall 1986; (2) in 1985, for the first time in the history of the VCCS, full-time students generated less than half (49.7%) of the full-time equivalent student (FTES) enrollment; (3) the number and percentage of full-time transfer students increased each year between 1984 and 1986; (4) 60% of the full-time students came from the 18-21 age group in fall 1986; (5) the percentage of the total FTES enrollment attributable to 18-21 year old full-time students remained near 30% between 1984 and 1986; and (6) in 1986, there was a sharp increase in the number of full-time 18-21 year old students. The data is presented by means of charts and graphs with brief explanatory text. (LAL)

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# The Shrinking Foundation:

# Two Years Later

Observations Regarding

Full Time "College Age" Students

Attending Virginia Community Colleges

Fall 1984 through Fall 1986

by

Don Puyear

JC 870 081

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Virginia Community

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February, 1987

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## Preface

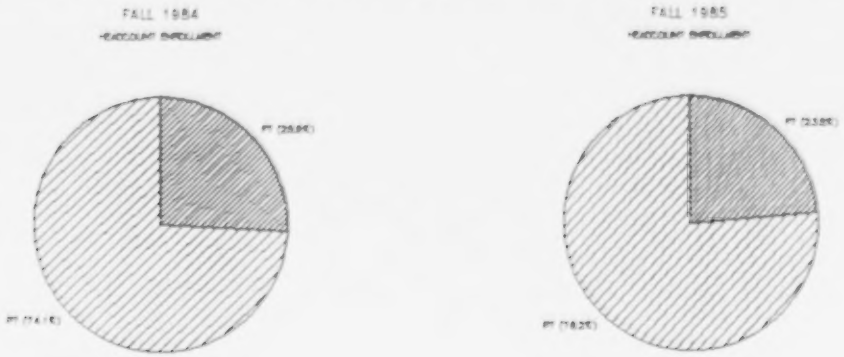
About two years ago the author prepared a paper entitled The Shrinking Foundation: Full Time Student Enrollment from the 18-21 Age Group in the Virginia Community College System. This paper addressed the diminishing number of potential full time 18-21 year old students and announced an extensive marketing and retention initiative that was to address this and other problems that were causing community college enrollments to diminish.

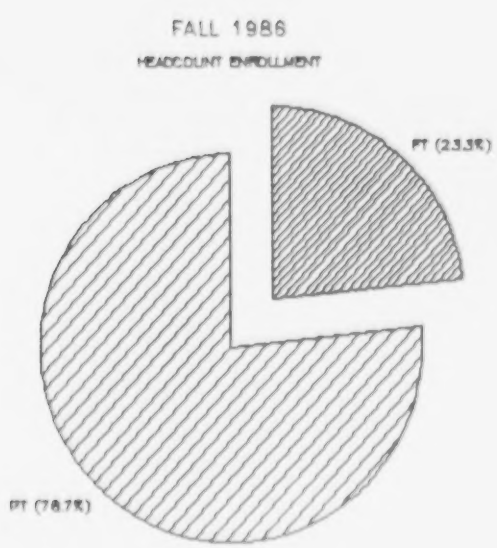
By any measure the marketing and retention efforts resulting from that initiative were successful. The decline in enrollment was arrested in 1985 and, aided by a reduction in tuition, 1986 Fall Quarter enrollment increased dramatically.

The purpose of this paper is to return to the analysis of The Shrinking Foundation to see what effect the marketing and retention efforts of the past two years might have had on the market segment examined in the 1985 paper, the full time 18-21 year old student.

## The 1985 paper stated:(1)

Full time students provide the foundation for all other community college student populations. While full time students represent only about a quarter of the headcount enrollment.




**The proportion of students classified as full time dropped from 25.9% in Fall 1984 to 23.8% in Fall 1985. The proportion of full time students declined further to 23.3% in Fall 1986.**

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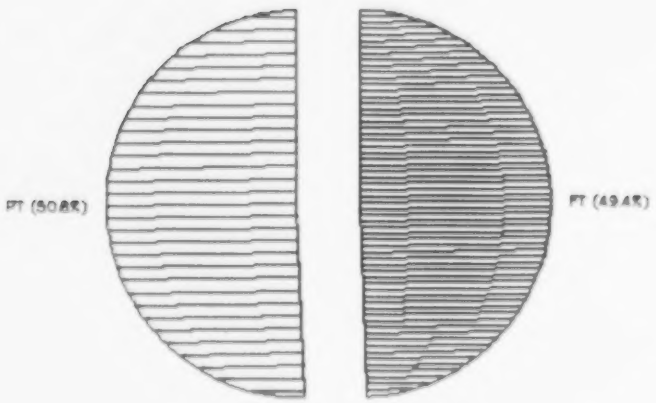
(1) The Shrinking Foundation: Full time Student Enrollment From the 18-21 Age Group in the Virginia Community College System. Richmond: Virginia Community College System, 1985.
The text of The Shrinking Foundation will be repeated in small type in this paper.

they represent about half of the full time equivalent enrollment.

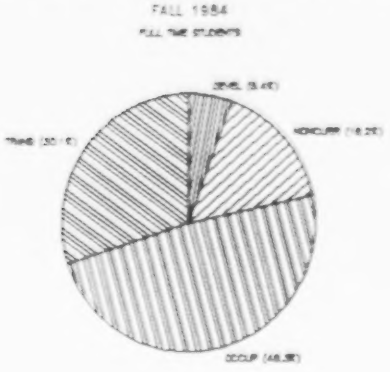
FALL 1986

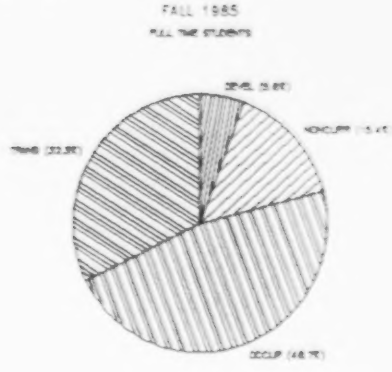
FTES ENROLLMENT




In 1985, for the first time in the history of the VCCS, full time students generated less than half of the full time equivalent student enrollment. Full time students produced 49.7% of the FTES enrollment in the Fall of 1985, and 49.4% in the Fall of 1986.

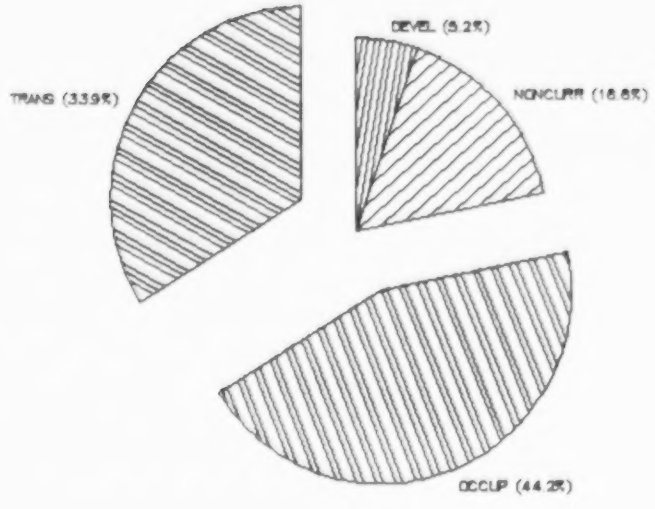
In the Fall quarter, 1984, nearly half of the full time students were enrolled in occupational programs. Thirty percent were enrolled in transfer programs.





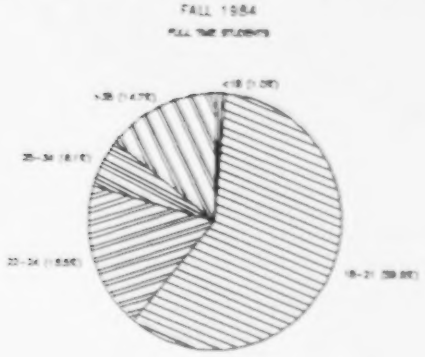
FALL 1986

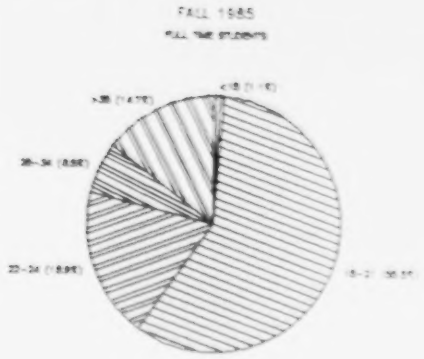
FULL TIME STUDENTS




Both the number and percentage of full time transfer students increased each year: 8,243 (30.1%) in Fall 1984 to 8,334 (32.3%) in Fall 1985 and 9,247 (33.8%) in Fall 1986. Conversely, the number and percentage of full time occupational students decreased from 13,214 (48.3%) in 1984 to 12,046 (46.7%) in 1985. The number of full time occupational students increased very slightly to 12,065 in 1986. The percentage was smaller (44.2%) because of the overall increase in full time enrollment.

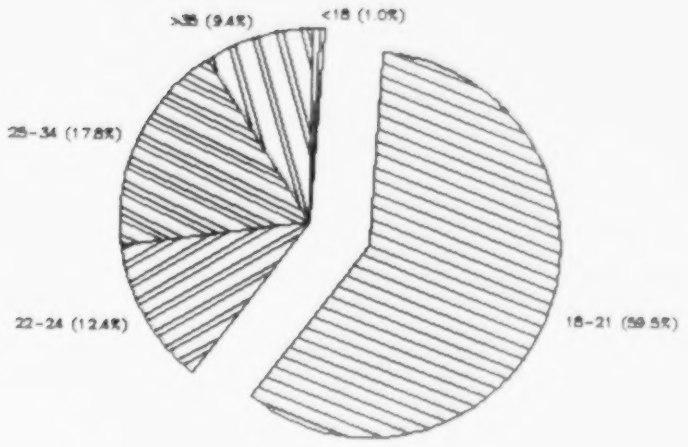
60% of the full time students came from the 18-21 age group





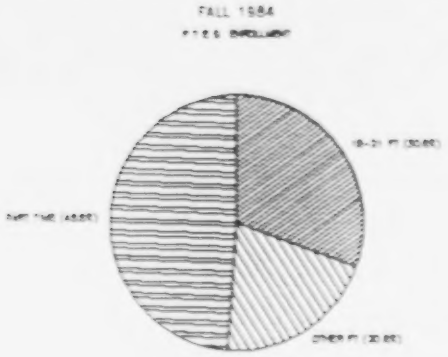
FALL 1986

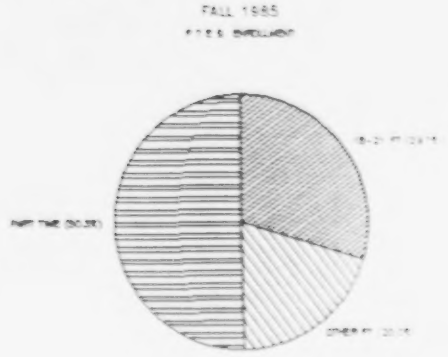
FULL TIME STUDENTS




There has been little change in the percentage of the full time students who are from 18 to 21 years old.

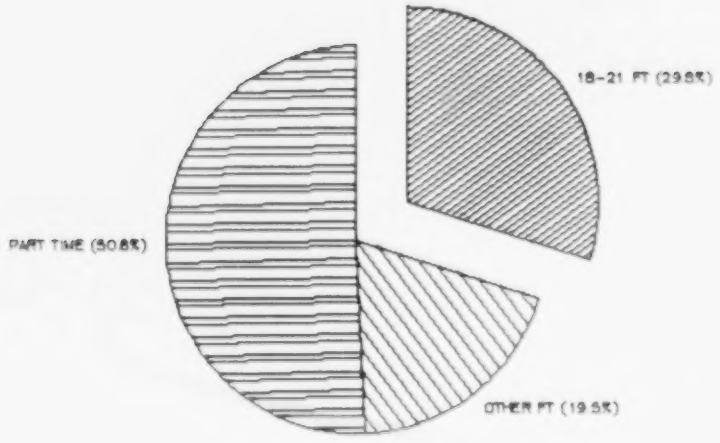
In fact, in Fall, 1984, 30% of the total VCCS FTES came from 18-21 full time students.





FALL 1986

FTES ENROLLMENT

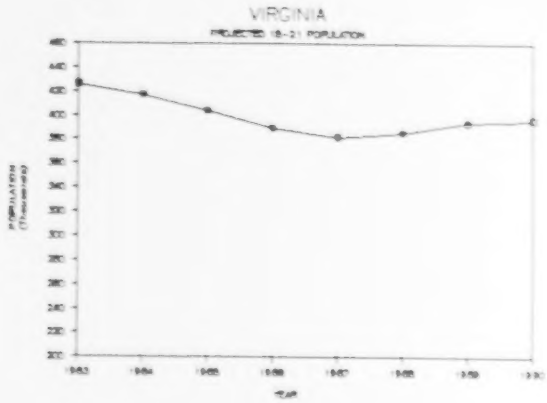



The percentage of the total FTES enrollment attributable to 18-21 year old full time students has remained nearly constant.

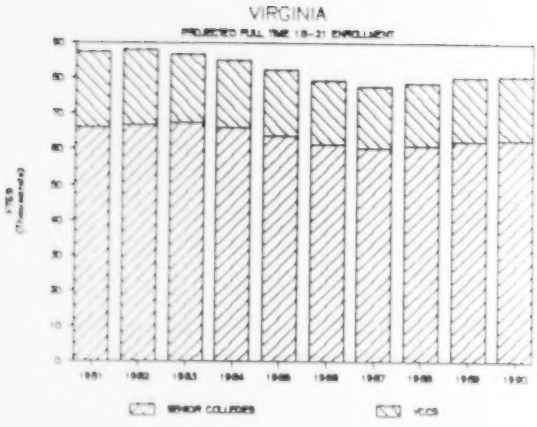
The Shrinking Foundation paper then described the reduction in the 18-21 year population and its implications for the VCCS, as follows:

But, the 18-21 year population is shrinking, at least for a while.

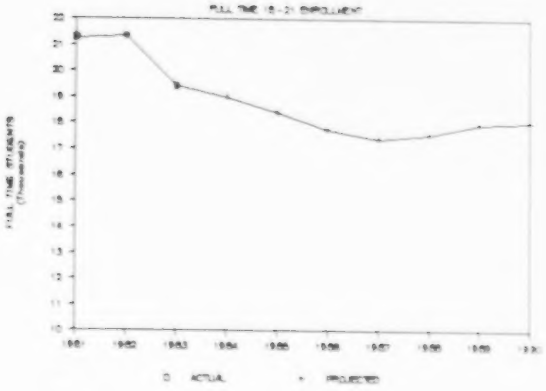
After 1987 it will slowly recover.



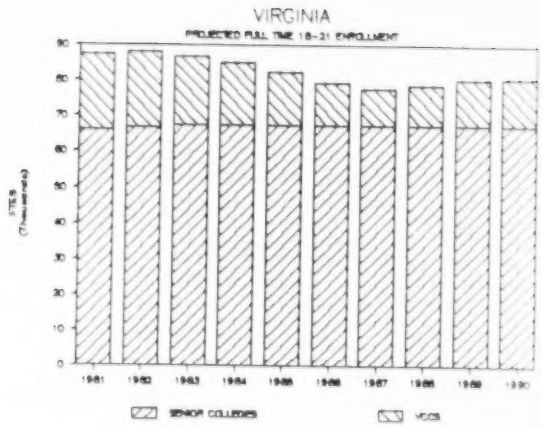

If the same proportion of the 18-21 population continues to attend college full time, and if community colleges continue to attract the same share of the available 18-21 students,



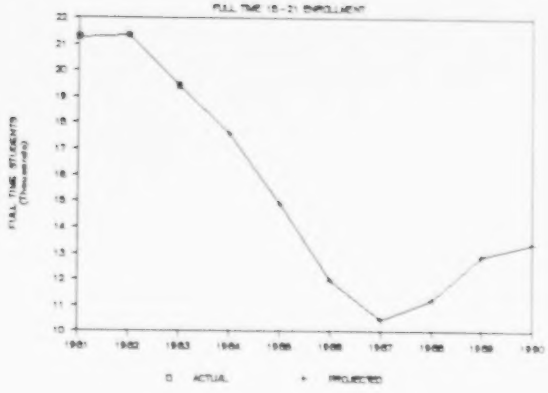
Then, the number of full time 18-21 students enrolling in community colleges will decline from 21,339 in 1982 to 17,417 in 1987, or - 18.4%.



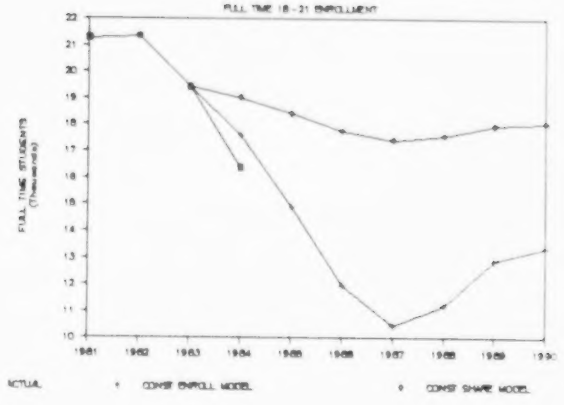
However, it is every bit as likely that the senior colleges and universities will continue to enroll <u>at least</u> the same <u>number</u> of full time students as they do now.



If so, full time 18-21 community college enrollments will decline from 21,339 in 1982 to 10,445 in 1987, or - 51.1%.




When we examine the actual enrollment in 1984, we see that, in fact, the decline in 18-21 full time enrollment was greater than would have been predicted by either of these models.



The Shrinking Foundations paper then went on to declaim, as follows:

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

ARE WE GOING TO LOSE OVER HALF OF OUR FULL TIME ENROLLMENT?

TO ANSWER THAT, LET US CONSIDER THE FAMILIAR STORY OF DICKENS' A CHRISTMAS CAROL:

You will recall that Ebenezer Scrooge, a hard and pragmatic manager, had been visited by the Ghost of Christmas Past, who reminded him of better times,

and by the Ghost of Christmas Present, who showed Scrooge some things about how things really were that he hadn't bothered to learn,

and, finally, by the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. This final Ghost showed him the inevitable result of the manner in which he had been conducting his life, and it was bitter. In agony, Scrooge called out:

> "... answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?"
>
> "Good Spirit, ... Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life!"

You will recall that Scrooge did change. He became concerned about people rather than only in numbers. You will recall, also, that as a result of those changes, the terrible things shown by the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come did NOT come to pass.

We have seen some shadows of things that Will be unless, like Ebenezer Scrooge, we live an altered life.

CONSIDER:

Only 20 % of the 18-21 age group attends college full time.

HOW MANY MORE COULD BE ATTRACTED TO OUR PROGRAMS IF

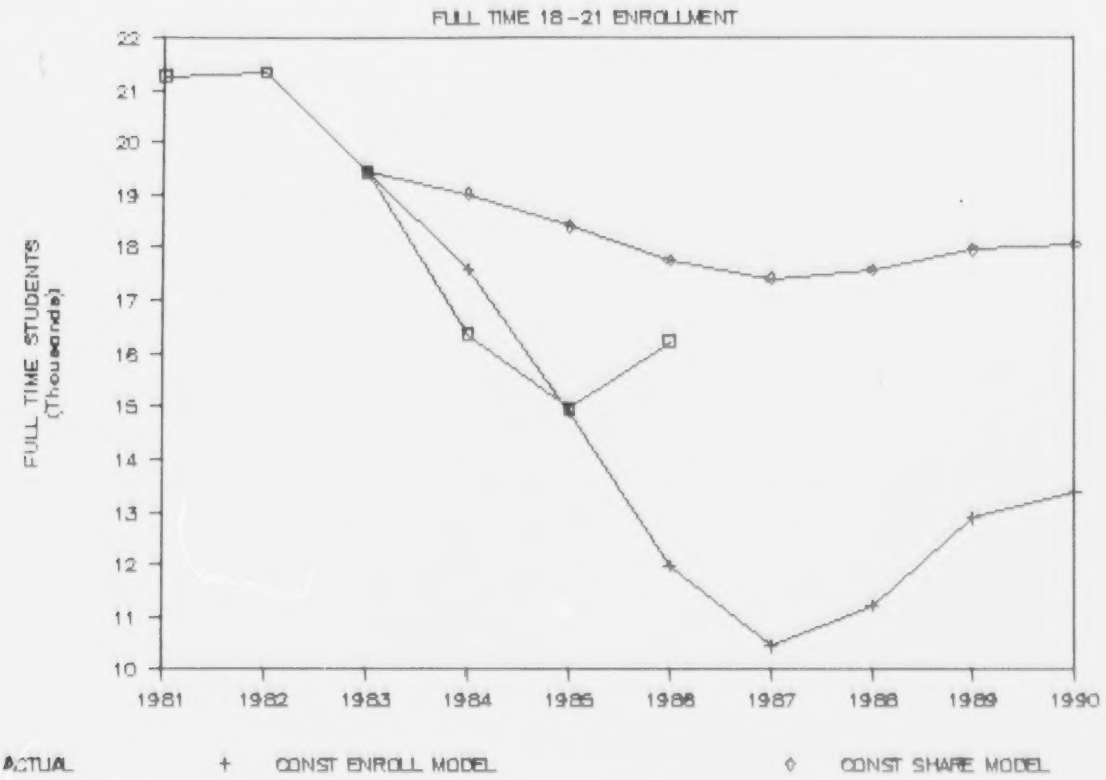
WE HAD THE RIGHT PROGRAMS,

AT THE RIGHT PLACES,

AND IF

WE APPROACHED THEM IN THE RIGHT MANNER?

What actually happened?




There was an improvement in the trend in 1985, but the number of full time 18-21 year old students continued to decline. In 1986, however, there was a sharp increase in number of full time 18-21 year old students. Another similar increase next year would bring the VCCS back to the same market share of 18-21 year old full time students that it had in 1983.

Observations.

- It appears that, as in the case of Ebenezer Scrooge, the terrible things shown by the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come did not come to pass. The extensive and increasingly sophisticated marketing and retention efforts of the colleges and the reduction in community college tuition resulted in a significant increase in community college enrollment. While part time enrollment increased more rapidly than full time enrollment, all types of students participated in the enrollment increase.

- The continuing increase in the number of full time university parallel students is encouraging, especially in the face of a continuing decline in the 18 to 21 year old population.

- The stabilization of the number of full time occupational students is good news, but the fact that there was only a small increase in full time occupational students suggests that this is an area that needs attention.

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